News 19 November 2026 | English article

# Pope Leo XIV Celebrates Mass for 400th Anniversary of St Peter's Basilica Dedication

*A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.*

**KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY**

*"The parish church of the world."*

*(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)*

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

## The Story - Part One

Pope Leo XIV celebrated Mass in St Peter's Basilica on Wednesday 18 November 2026, marking exactly 400 years since the dedication of the current basilica on 18 November 1626. The Chicago-born pontiff led the liturgy beneath the soaring dome, holding up the Book of the Gospels before the faithful gathered in the Vatican.

One hundred and twenty years - that is how long the basilica took to build. Twenty pontificates came and went while the stones were being laid, and twelve architects put their hands to the work before it was finished. Four centuries later, the building they left behind still stands at the heart of Roman Catholicism, and the Mass on Wednesday was its birthday.

St Peter's Basilica is built on the tomb of St Peter, and it has been called "the parish church of the world." Pilgrims arrive from every continent, and many of them have waited years for the moment they step through its doors. On Wednesday, they came for a different reason: to mark the day the building itself was given to God.

### 120 Years, 20 Pontificates, 12 Architects: How St Peter's Basilica Was Built

The basilica did not rise in a quiet age. It survived the Protestant Reformation, which began in 1517, and the Sack of Rome in 1527, when the city itself was torn apart. The builders kept going through it all, generation after generation, even when the world around them seemed to be falling apart.

That is the begining of the story Leo wanted the faithful to remember. A church that took 120 years to finish was never a project of one man, one pope, or one lifetime. It was the work of people who laid stones they knew they would never see crowned, trusting that someone else would finish what they had started.

Pope Urban VIII dedicated the finished basilica on 18 November 1626, exactly four hundred years before Wednesday's Mass. During that dedication, Urban VIII anointed blue and red mosaic crosses on the nave walls with oil. Those same crosses were still there on Wednesday, and they were closer than anyone expected.

## The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

### PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

## READ THE FULL STORY

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